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**PARENTS SAY THEY ARE TALKING TO THEIR KIDS ABOUT SEX,
BUT TEENS DISAGREE**

October is Let's Talk Month

(RICHMOND, Va.)—Ninety percent of parents report having a discussion with their children about sex. Yet nearly four in ten teens say they have never had a conversation with their parents about sex, according to recent studies by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. The studies looked at adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) aims to help close this communication gap.

“At a time when teens report that parents have the most influence over their decisions about sex, we need to help them have these important conversations,” said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H.

Teens often are uncomfortable talking to their parents about sex. Parents can help by creating an environment where the whole family can speak openly, and where children are able to ask questions and get the support they need to make healthy decisions for their futures.

But starting those conversations can be difficult. Many parents report that they are unsure of what to say to their child about sex and whether they will be able to answer questions from their children. Parents are also concerned that they will be asked personal questions about their experiences, and say they themselves grew up in homes where sex was not discussed.

“Parents need support to have ongoing conversations with their children through the ‘tween’ and teen years about puberty, sexuality and relationships,” said Gale Grant, director Adolescent Sexual Health Program.

The Virginia Department of Health has developed several resources to help facilitate conversations between parents and teens about sexuality and relationships. A free parent resource called Talk 2 Me: A Toolkit for Discussing Sexuality and Relationships with Your Kids can be obtained by calling (877) CANWAIT. The kit can also be obtained at the State Fair of Virginia from Sept. 28 to Oct. 8, or online at www.vatalk2me.org. The Talk 2 Me Web site also includes materials for parents and teens to gauge how well they communicate.

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